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Hardships on Single Parents

In today’s society the view of what a “family” is, is constantly changing from day to day. The traditional view of marriage and family once being a valued and cherished thing has now changed to families splitting up whenever there are tough times or one of the adults to no longer want to be a parent; causing many adults to become single parents an in today’s economy being a single parent is one of the hardest nonpaid jobs there is. From authors Lynn Olcott in “The Ballad of a Single Mother”, Rebecca Blank in “Absent Fathers: Why Don’t We Ever talk About the Unmarried Men?” to “The Pursuit of Happyness” written by [Steven Conrad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steven_Conrad). All share common opinions and subtopics in their short pieces of work when it comes to the hardships of being a single parent and having a family can bring.

In “The Ballad of a Single Mother” Lynn Olcott shows the many trials and tribulations she had to go through to provide for her children while being a single mother. Many of the cases she missed a lot of their adolescent years she states “I missed a lot of milestones. Day-care workers toilet-trained my babies and wrote me note about their days.” (Olcott 446) Being a single parent and trying to provide comes with some heavy burdens of having to miss a lot of what goes on in the child’s life. Being a parent you have to make sacrifices even when times get hard like when she stated the “One year, I lost my job. I quickly took another, but at a much lower salary. My Son was a talented soccer player, and I could no longer afford the fee for him to play.” (Olcott 447) There are many kids out there being supported by single parents that cant do all the things that are available to children with both sets of parents can. In Absent Fathers Rebecca Blank adds that “Many less-skilled single mothers find it difficult to escape poverty through their own earnings” (441)

Women aren’t the only ones that have hardships when it comes to today’s society; men have a lot of pressure as well. We don’t often tend to look at the absent fathers point of view of things because mainly it is the single mothers that are in the spot light but what really is behind the men that are affected by the fact that they cannot support their children. “The lives of poor single men are much less well understood, since these men typically have less contact with the public and private organizations that serve the poor. By most accounts, poor unmarried men exhibit far more behavioral problems than single mothers, despite the fact that much of the policy discussion focuses on the mothers.” (Blank 441) Furthermore in the “Pursuit of Happyness” a movie based on real life which is set in 1981, in San Francisco, the smart salesman and family man Chris Gardner invests the family savings in a bone-density scanners, a piece of equipment twice as expensive as an x-ray machine but has a slightly clearer image. This decision financially breaks the family, bringing troubles with his wife Linda, who leaves him and moves to New York. Their son Christopher stays with Chris because he and his wife both know that he will be able to take better care of him. Without any money or a wife, but committed to his son, Chris sees a chance to fight for a stockbroker internship position at Dean Witter, offering a better career at the end of a six-month unpaid training period. During that period, Chris goes through a lot of hardship personally and professionally. When he thinks he is "stable," he finds that the government takes the last bit of money in his bank account for taxes. He is homeless because he can't pay his rent. He is forced at one point to stay in a bathroom at a train station, and must scramble from work every day to a shelter for the homeless. He leaves work early every day so him and his son will be assured of a place to sleep. At the end of the six month training period, he is called into an office and in it were the heads of Dean Witter. Chris thinks that he is about to be told the job will not be his. Then they tell him that he has been an excellent trainee and that tomorrow he will have to wear his shirt and tie again as it will be his first day as a broker. Chris struggles to hold back tears. Outside he begins to cry as the busy people of San Francisco walk past him. He rushes to his son's daycare, hugging him and knowing that after everything him and his son had been through things would be all right. Lynn Olcotts writing about hardship is very similar to the one that went on in the Pursuit of Happyness both parents ended up being single parents fighting to do whatever was possible for their children in every aspect needed. Blank also supports the movie but stating that “..these men are at greater risk of being homeless.” (440) Which in the Pursuit of Happyness Chris was left to be a soul supporter of his little boy and with that at one point they became homeless.

The two articles and movie, “Absent Fathers: Why Don’t We Ever Talk About the Unmarried Men?”, “The Ballad of a Single Mother” and the “The Pursuit of Happyness” all share the common similarities of a single parent having to go through a lot of hardships and challenging times to provide for their family.

Work Cited

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*The Pursuit of Happyness*. Dir. Gabriele Muccino. Perf. Will Smith, Thandie Newton, and Jaden Smith. Overbrook Entertainment, 2006. DVD.

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